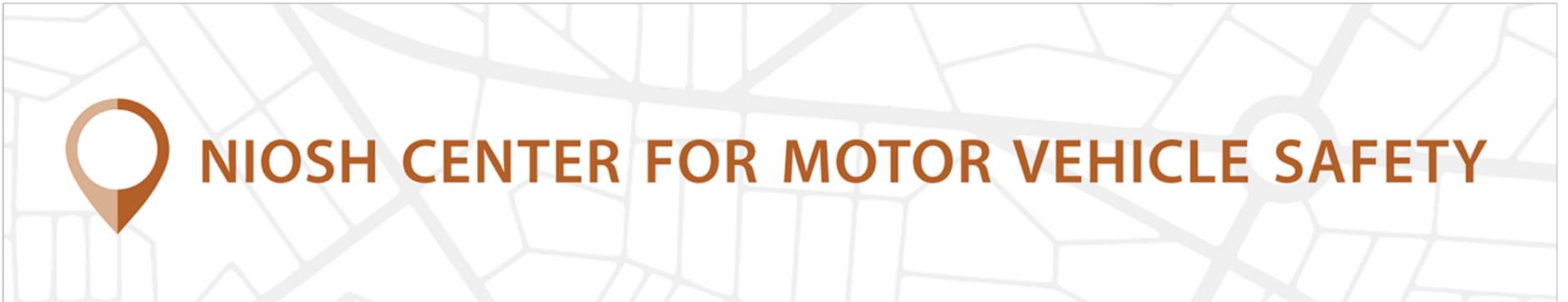


Behind the Wheel at Work – Vol 7 No 1



Behind the Wheel at Work is a quarterly eNewsletter bringing you the latest news from the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety.

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Work Zone Safety

Work zones are a sign to slow down. This month we're sharing ways that employers, workers, and drivers can keep highway work zones safe.

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The Facts



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What is a work zone?

According to the [Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#)  , a **work zone** is an area of a highway with construction, maintenance, or utility work activities. It is typically marked by signs, channelizing devices, barriers, pavement markings, and/or work vehicles.

Work zones are dangerous both for drivers passing through these areas and for workers who build, repair, and maintain our streets, bridges, and highways.

Motor vehicle crash deaths in work zones from 2016-2020^[1]

- 4,048 individuals – motorists, other road users, and workers – died in work zone crashes. On average—810 per year.
- These deaths most often occurred in construction work zones (2,454; 61%), followed by work zones of unknown type (1,259; 31%), maintenance work zones (270; 7%), and utility work zones (65; 2%).
- Most of those killed were drivers of motor vehicles in transport (2,526; 62%), followed by passengers of motor vehicles in transport (788; 19%) and pedestrians (651; 16%).
- Nearly half of all work zone deaths were in Texas (826), Florida (379), California (371), Georgia (243), and Illinois (150).
- 30% of fatal work zone crashes involved a large truck (1,075).
- Number of people killed in work zones when at least one driver was:
 - Speeding (1,272, 31%)
 - Impaired by alcohol (1,139, 28%)
 - Distracted (544, 13%)
 - Drowsy (140, 3%)

Workers killed at road construction sites:

Workers might be struck by a passing motorist or by construction equipment, or they might themselves be an operator whose equipment rolls over.

From 2011-2020^[2]

- 1,260 workers died at road construction sites. On average—126 per year.
- Transportation events accounted for 73% of worker deaths at road construction sites during the 10-year period (919). In 63% of these transportation events, the worker was struck by a vehicle (577).
- 371 of the 577 workers were struck by a forward-moving vehicle, 123 by a backing vehicle.

From 2011-2018 (total: 1,008)^[3]

- Pickup trucks and SUVs accounted for 169 worker deaths at road construction sites, followed by automobiles (149), machinery (146), semi-trucks (141), and dump trucks (89).
- More than two-thirds of the workers who were killed were employed as:
 - Construction laborers (253)
 - Heavy and tractor trailer drivers (142)
 - First-line supervisors of construction and extraction workers (96)
 - Highway maintenance workers (96)
 - Construction equipment operators (81)
- 864 workers killed at road construction sites worked in private-sector construction. Of those, 68% worked for either heavy and civil engineering construction companies (470) or specialty trade contractors (119).
- 144 workers (14%) killed at road construction sites worked in the government sector, with roughly equal numbers working for state (73) and local governments (68).

The bottom line: Work zones are a sign to slow down and focus only on driving.

[1] NHTSA [2022]. [Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool \(FIRST\) \(dot.gov\)](#) 

[2] Bureau of Labor Statistics [2021]. [Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2014-2020](#)  . Create customized tables.

[3] 2019 and 2020 data are not available or not reported consistently for all vehicles, occupations, and industries.

How to Promote Safe Driving in Work Zones

As an employer, you can take steps to promote safe driving and inform workers who drive on



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the job how to practice safe driving in work zones.

What Employers Can Do ^

- Schedule routes to avoid work zones and make this information available to drivers and supervisors.
- If work zones are unavoidable, modify worker schedules to accommodate delays.
- Train drivers on how to safely navigate work zones.
 - Participate in [National Work Zone Awareness Week](#) ↗, sharing work zone safety information with your workers.
- Remind drivers to observe posted speed limits in work zones.
- Establish a safe-speed policy and remind drivers to adjust speed to suit road conditions.
- Ban all phone use (texting, handheld, hands-free) while driving a company vehicle, and ban use of company-issued phones while driving a personal vehicle.
- Communicate to drivers what they need to do to comply with your company's policies.

What Drivers Can Do ^

- Map out safe routes in advance and check for work zones.
- Avoid work zones if you can – leave early in case of work zone delays.
- Pay attention to warning signs and follow reduced speed limits in work zones.
- Follow instructions from flaggers at work zones.
- Give pedestrian workers extra room at work zones.
- As you approach a work zone, maintain a safe following distance so that you can stop safely as traffic slows down.
- Do not use your phone while driving. Pull over in a safe location to look up directions, text, or to make or receive a call.
- Focus on the driving environment — the vehicles, pedestrian workers, objects, and events around you that indicate you need to act quickly to control or stop your vehicle while navigating work zones.
- Keep alert and aware of your surroundings. Other drivers may be impaired, fatigued, or rushing to reach their destinations.
- Allow extra space for trucks, which cannot slow down and maneuver as easily as passenger vehicles.

Go-to Resources

NIOSH web page: [Highway Work Zone Safety](#)

National Work Zone Awareness Week web page: [nwzaw.org](#) ↗

National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse web pages:

- [Work Zones](#) ↗



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- [National & State Traffic Data](#) 
- [Work Zone Traffic Crash Trends and Statistics](#) 

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration web page:

- [Work Zones Safety Tips](#) 
- [Work Zone Safety Toolkit](#) 

Federal Highway Administration web page: [What's a Work Zone?](#) 

In Other News

NSC: Distracted Driving

New National Safety Council (NSC) estimates show that our roads are the most dangerous they've been in years. [Each day, eight people are killed in distraction-affected crashes](#)  – eight parents, friends, and co-workers. NSC offers free resources to spread the word about the dangers of distracted driving and the simple changes that can help us all make it home safely on every drive. Visit nsc.org/JustDrive  for more information.

How to Choose the Right Fatigue Detection Technology for Your Workplace

Fatigue can reduce focus, slow reaction time, and impair decision-making skills. Since fatigue has many sources, it can be hard to detect on job sites. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published an [infographic](#)  and [graphics](#) to highlight different factors for employers to consider when selecting a fatigue detection technology as part of a comprehensive safety management approach.

More Information

- Please send your comments and suggestions to us: kur4@cdc.gov
- Visit our webpage: [Motor Vehicle Safety at Work](#)